

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application, and reconsideration of the Office Action dated May 4, 2005. Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 19-22 will remain pending in this application. The changes to the claims are supported by the specification and original claims. For example, the changes to claim 19 are supported by page 3, lines 32-35 and page 10, lines 25-32 of the present specification. No new matter is incorporated by this Amendment.

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Claims 18, and 21 and 22 as dependent from claim 18, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as purportedly anticipated by JP 08-209350.

In addition, claim 20, as dependent from claim 18, was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as purportedly obvious over JP 08-209350.

Claim 18 is canceled and claims 20-22 have been amended to depend only from claim 19. Thus, both of the above two rejections are moot.

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Claims 19-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as purportedly obvious based on Nino et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,637,153) in view of JP07-335563 and as evidenced by Sandhu et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,201,219). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent claim 19 (from which claims 20-22 depend) concerns a cleaning method of a heat treatment apparatus for feeding cleaning gas in a treatment vessel and removing an unnecessary film in the treatment vessel. In the method, the cleaning gas includes ClF₃. The cleaning gas is preheated up to a heat decomposition temperature of ClF₃, in a range of 300 to 1000°C. This is done outside the treatment vessel. It results in decomposition of ClF₃ into Cl and F. So heating the ClF₃ to its decomposition

temperature providing Cl and F allows the treatment vessel to be securely cleaned by the ClF_3 , Cl and F. Applicants point out that fluorine is a very effective cleanser.

None of the cited, alleged, references teaches or fairly suggests the above described features of the claimed method. For example, the Office Action concedes that Nino fails to teach or fairly suggest preheating ClF_3 gas up to a range of 300 to 1000°C. JP07-335563 discloses no more than heating the cleaning gas up to only 220° C, well short of Applicants' claimed range. Sandhu likewise fails to teach or fairly suggest preheating ClF_3 gas up to range of 300 to 1000°C to achieve decomposition. Hence, even when combined, the teachings of the cited art fail to disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention. Moreover, there is nothing in the combined teachings of the cited art which would have motivated those of ordinary skill to have devised Applicants' recited preheating step.

Thus, in view of the above, Applicants submit that this rejection is overcome and request it be withdrawn.

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Applicants respectfully submit that this Amendment and the above remarks obviate the outstanding rejections in this case, thereby placing the application in condition for immediate allowance. Allowance of this application is earnestly solicited.

If any other fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17 are due in connection with this filing, please charge the fees to Deposit Account No. 02-4300; Order No. 033082.0871.

If an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is necessary that is not accounted for in the papers filed herewith, such an extension is requested. The extension fee should be charged to Deposit Account No. 02-4300; Order No. 033082.0871.

Respectfully submitted,
SMITH, GAMBRELL & RUSSELL, LLP

By:



Michael A. Makuch, Reg. No. 32,263
1850 M Street, N.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone: (202)263-4300
Facsimile: (202) 263-4329

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